

[God was Happy]

Beliefs and Customs — Folk [Stuff?]

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview [7?]

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Vivian Morris

ADDRESS 225 W. 130th St. New York City

DATE Nov. 23, 1938

SUBJECT GOD WAS HAPPY — MOTHER HORN

1. Date and time of interview Sunday Nov. 20th (9 P. M. to 12.00)
2. Place of interview [Pentecostal?] Church 129th St. & Lenox Ave.
3. Name and address of informant None
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc. The church is one flight up over a hardware store with seating capacity of 800 people. As you enter the door you are greeted

Library of Congress

by a portly Negro woman garbed in white who pokes out a collection plate to lift the silver offering.

To the extreme right are rows of benches uninterrupted rows of chairs range from the back to within three yards of the pulpit, which faces the front seats and rostrum with about eight chairs on each side, they were occupied by the angels.

In a little cranny, which jutted from the left was about six rows of seats enough to seat thirty six people.

To the left of, and above the pulpit were eight crutches, purported to have been left by Mother Horn's followers who had walked away healed the house was filled to capacity and many stood in the aisles & in the door.

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Vivian Morris

ADDRESS 225 W. 130th St.

DATE Nov. 23, 1938

SUBJECT GOD WAS HAPPY - MOTHER HORN

Mother Horn stretched forth her firm brown hands in a silent command for quiet; and a hushed awe struck the group that comprised the disciples of the Pentecostal Church, located on Lenox Avenue at 129th street; in the heart of Harlem.

Library of Congress

The eight-hundred eyes of the congregation were glued to that strong featured, commanding Negro woman who was enrobed in white from head to foot. A shimmering silk gown differentiated Mother Horn, (who was affectionately dubbed by some of her followers as God's right arm) from her "angels" who were dressed entirely in white cotton raiments. The angels who were seated in the pulpit and in front rows of the church formed a white phalanx of avid worshippers. They sucked in their breath with spellbound ecstasy as the drops of wisdom began to flow indirectly from the holy lips of God.

"God is unhappy", she slowly intoned with a slight, deliberate pause between words.

Oh. Mother Ho'n whut we done done? agonized a big frog eyed black angel, as she slowly clasped and unclasped her ham-like hands that had become so from years of toil and back breaking labor in an Alabama cottonfield. Her body was broken, but her spirit lived.

2

A low wail swelled from the entire group of angels and they slowly waved their arms warding off sin.

Please dear Angels "Taint whut yo'll done done. Hi'ts de worl dats displeasin Him — dese debbil infested fo'ks". She slowly stretched forth her arms her magnetic fingers swayed the wills of her disciples. They followed her every move.

"Wicked, Wicked, people chanted" the angels swaying from side to side, then rocking to and fro in hypnotic unison.

Then Mother Horn became a transformed dynamo of action. Her eyes flashed her tensed body exuded seething, swirling religious fervor. God's right arm strode the pulpit transmitting her fiery words unto the all absorbing person of her disciples and all who were in ear shot of them.

Library of Congress

For the next three hours Mother Horn was throttling the problem at hand, wiping out sin by rubbing and preaching with words and action.

God must be appeased pascified and made happy.

“God is in me” flamed Mother Horn. She stamped her foot to the off beat of the hand clapping tempo, kept by the members “Dese sins mus go.”

With an imperceptible motion of her hand Mother Horn signaled the drummer, pianoplayer and tambourine beater to swing out, slowly, softly ever increasing increscendo and time.

“Mus Go,” screeched the disciples. They waved their arms jerked their heads, twisted squirmed.

“Got to git fiah” screamed Mother Horn, bucking her head nad rolling her eyes ceiling ward.

“Fiah! Fiah! Fiah! Burn out de sin” Chanted the disciples. Face was distorted with paroxysm after paroxysm of fevor caused by her 3 intense interest at the proceedings.

A lean woman, clad in a close fitting red dress suddenly jumped up trembling, swaying then she thrust out her stiffened arms. She was black. This was a victory dance. They must please the Gods.

She swayed from side to side in sinuous rhythm to the hand clapping and maddening thumps of the drum. Wild primitive jungle music was leaping from the piano, from the tambourine. God, Oh, Laud God a mighty mus be pleased.

The music became faster, faster, faster. She gave a frenzied unabonded exhibition of trucking, Susi Susie Q, Shag, but there was not one vestige of sacrilege.

Have Mercy Laud. Have Mercy Laud, Mercy, Mercy,

Library of Congress

The disciples were rolling, reeling, stamping. The lady in red was running around the church mumbling a weird chants. She was joined by a woman in black another, another — the whole church joined in.

Everybody was rolling, crawling, running babbling — old women young girls. The angels had their hands full trying to control the other disciples.

The lady in red was reaching a climax. She stopped and was instantly surrounded by five angels waving away and quieting sin with short Sh, Sh, Sh, Mother Horn Sh, Sh,

“Mother Horn” she groned groaned as she stiffened then collapsed into the waiting arms of the angels who quickly dragged her to a corner and covered her with a filthy blanket. They left her lying in a state of coma from whence she would awake clean and pure and a disciple of Mother Horn.

The lady in black fainted. Here and there a holy roller twitched in religious ecstasy, then was silent.

4

The angels worked like fury, Blankets, Blankets, Coasts Sister, Blanket, they were dropping like hail.

At the signal from God's right arm the three musicians slowed their tune decreased their crescendo, then dwindled away.

The disciples slumped limply in their seats, the floor was littered with dishelved inert froms dotted here and there with the sweat stained garment of a holy ghost ridden angel.

Here and there a tired angel could be seen still rubbing a convert — her back, her breast, rubbing out sin.

Library of Congress

Happy sighs and short yelping relief pierced the church, punctured by a few Mother Horn, added by the persons who were gradually coming out of their stupor.

Mother Horn, everforceful, beamed with a calm triumph as [thred?] angels, one gently wiping perspiration from her face, another adjusted her raiment and the third holding a glass of water, attended her.

Having completed their task, they were calmly waved to their seats with heavenly words.

Mother Horn raised her hand for silence. She said solemnly, "We will not witness de fo mal ceptin into God's Kingdom of de new disciples.

"Amen"

"Ah will 'noint dey hands wid de holy watah, Cod'n to de Bible"

"Amen"

She poured water from a glass and the new saved sisters "half dragged by the hefty angels were passed under the holy hand, and with many holy gestures and an unintelligible prayer they passed into the kingdom of the saved. As the last sister passed under her hand, Mother Horn, "Gods right Arm" raised both hands. palms facing the audience and said.

"God was Happy"